

8TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON STATISTICS

Keynote Speech by H.E. Mr. Chaiwut Thanakamanusorn
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Government

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Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under Secretary General of United Nations
and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Mr. Gogita Todratze, Chair of the seventh session and Bureau member of
the Committee on Statistics

Ms. Rachael Beavan, Director, Statistics Division, ESCAP

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to all,

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, for inviting me to be a part of the Opening Session today. I am particularly honoured to do so this year as we are commemorating the 75th anniversary of the creation of ESCAP.

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you, especially those of you who are participating in person, back in Bangkok after such a long period of travel difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to ESCAP for their efforts to organize this event

as a hybrid event with both in person and remote participation from all over the Asia-Pacific region.

(A huge shift of digital economy during COVID-19 pandemic)

Two years ago, in August 2020 when the Committee on Statistics last met, we were at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no COVID vaccine, and we were surrounded by uncertainty. Now, we have a range of COVID-19 vaccines. But the pandemic remains a grave threat and there are still widescale impacts within and among countries. Progress on delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has stalled and in some cases has even reversed.

However, the pandemic showed us the benefits of digital technology. According to the “Global Digital Report 2021” by We Are Social, Thai citizens’ have welcomed the move towards the digital world. Thai internet users spend almost nine hours in front of a screen each day, which is not only above the global average but the 9th highest in the world. Thailand was ranked third in the world for e-commerce adoption with 84% of the country’s internet users having bought something online. The country also recorded the highest number of transactions through mobile banking and financial transaction apps in 2021.

(Pivotal role of NSO in the digital era)

As we see this digital transformation unfold, the role of the National Statistical Offices as data providers to inform policy makers and to

measure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals continues to evolve. Statistical Offices who used to work mainly with data from censuses and surveys are increasingly using alternative data sources. For example, next year, Thailand National Statistical Office will conduct the 2023 Agricultural Census, by using data from the Central Farmer Registration Database or Farmer One of Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives.

As Statistical Offices embrace new data sources and new technologies, there is a need for strong legal and institutional arrangements. Data governance frameworks can support the modernization of official statistics and remove unnecessary barriers to release the full benefit of statistics. I am also pleased to see that data governance has a special focus at this 8th Committee on Statistics.

As the Minister overseeing the National Statistical Office, I see first-hand the importance of statistical data for evidence-based planning and policymaking, especially in times of unpredicted events. Hence, I give full support to the Thai NSO in producing timely, relevant, and quality statistical data and information. I am very pleased many of you came to visit our offices yesterday and I hope you feel inspired for the important discussions this week.

(Conclusion)

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The crisis highlighted the need for timely and reliable statistics and data for governments to make informed decisions to support their citizens. And it also highlighted how data is becoming an essential resource in digital economies.

The ESCAP Committee on Statistics plays a crucial role in bringing countries together to discuss matters of strategic importance to regional statistical development, regional cooperation and the formulation of regional positions to advance official statistics in line with existing commitments, including the Collective Vision and Framework for Action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community and the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind.

The global community has given us a clear task to improve the world for future generations through the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development. Therefore, we need to continue working together in the international statistical community to support each other despite the many challenges we face. Timely, accurate and trusted official statistics are our best bet to ensure that no one is left behind.

I wish you all a fruitful discussion, and an enjoyable stay in Bangkok.

Thank you very much.